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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN, HAITI, IRAQ, U.S., ISRAEL,
BERNANKE;BERLIN

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- [¶1.](#) Lead Stories Summary

TV primetime newscasts and many papers led with a story on the decision of several statutory healthcare insurances to impose a special fee. Frankfurter Allgemeine headlined: "Millions of healthcare insured people to pay additional fees." Sddeutsche led with a story on Afghanistan and headlined: "German Afghanistan mission will be more risky." Berliner Zeitung reported that the Labor Ministry plans to increase the pressure on social benefit recipients

to find jobs. Frankfurter Rundschau led with a story on Opel. Berliner Zeitung carried a front-page photo showing the arrival of Israeli President Peres, who will deliver a speech to the Bundestag on tomorrow's Holocaust Memorial Day. Editorials focused on the healthcare system and the German debate on Afghanistan.

- [¶2.](#) (Afghanistan) London Conference, German Position

Sddeutsche editorialized: "One of NATO's greatest weaknesses is its

inability to permanently guarantee the security of the people. NATO often only chases away Taliban fighters and then disappears, leaving the Taliban to return to pick on the people who have cooperated with

NATO. As long as this is the case, the people will not oppose the Taliban and the quagmire that creates terrorism and oppression will not disappear. Defense Minister zu Guttenberg is right that the new strategy of the government must be to show more presence in the field to protect the people. The only problem is that this is not possible without deploying more soldiers."

Tagesspiegel remarked in an editorial: "The U.S. strategy is clear. Barack Obama considered it for six months and then made a decision. This will not be changed. It is no longer about what will be done, but about how it will be implemented. And what have the Germans done in the meantime? They have postponed the decision. They therefore do not play a role and it does not matter for the allies how the Germans interpret the mandate. Either the German army is increased to 7,000 troops and gets different orders, or it should be sent home."

Under the headline: "Every year the West hopes for a new cure," Handelsblatt opined: "Conferences on Afghanistan always boost creativity. The international community is developing new ideas

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every year about how to defeat the Taliban. Prior to the London conference, two new ideas were born. Industrial countries want to help Karzai buy out Taliban supporters. And the German army no longer wants to hide in its compound but go into the field. There is no doubt that both ideas sound as if they make sense and are very good. Differentiating between moderate and radical Taliban will be necessary. International soldiers can only overcome the increasing distance to the people by engaging more with them. However, the euphoria about both ideas is dashed by the fact that many ideas in the past were praised as cures--and then disappeared in the middle of nowhere."

Under the headline "U.S. now wants to bomb the Taliban to peace," Berliner Zeitung picked up ISAF Commander McChrystal's FT interview

and added in its intro: "The chief commander of the NATO troops in Afghanistan is hoping for a militarily forced peace with the Taliban. His goal is to weaken the Islamists with additional troops." In an

editorial, the paper discussed the idea of an exit program for Taliban supporters: "Americans and Britons have been trying such ways of pacifying the Taliban for a long time by giving loans to build houses and paying those who are willing to cooperate. This was never a huge program because one cannot be sure what the recipients will do with the money. A farmer in the morning and a Taliban supporter at night? In short, maybe German taxpayers are soon funding people who violate human rights. However, the program might be able to weaken the Taliban. Allowing moderate Taliban to participate in power would

make
Afghanistan a more secure place."

Regional tabloid of Cologne Express commented: "The war in
Afghanistan
cannot be won with military means. Already British troops made this
experience 200 years ago. In the 1980s, the Soviets found the
Afghans
a hard nut to crack. The highly armed U.S. and the allies seem to
have a similarly hard time. It is clear that things can't go on
like
this. A political solution must be found. As long as foreign
troops
are in the country, they will be fought against. Afghanistan must
therefore be enabled to provide for its own security and
reconstruction. This also means that the West must keep its
promises
to accelerate the training of police and army forces and providing
more money to build streets, schools and hospitals. This would be
the
best means against the terror of the Taliban - and for the
protection
of our soldiers."

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Regional Nrnberger Zeitung editorialized: "The German government's
claim that it will make a decision on the strategy in Afghanistan
only
after the London conference is ridiculous. The wild rumor is being
spread that London will 'decide' what the U.S. decided on its own a
long time ago."

13. (Haiti) Montreal Conference

The aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti disappeared from
front-pages
and is now reported on foreign pages. While ARD-TV's primetime
newscast Tagesschau noted: "Almost two weeks after the earthquake in

Haiti, the focus is more in the reconstruction of the country. In
the
Canadian city of Montreal, representatives of twenty countries are
debating financial assistance. EU foreign minister in Brussels
decided to deploy 300 police officers to increase security." In a
report from Haiti, the newscast said: "Particularly the situation of

Haitians living in tent cities is hardly improving despite the great
assistance efforts. Most of the three million people in Port-au-
Prince are starving. The UN can only supply aid where the security
of
the aid workers can be guaranteed." ZDF-TV's primetime newscast
heute
remarked that "the distribution of aid is working more efficiently
and
better. The UN is therefore getting more help to the people by the
day."

Regional Mittelbayerische Zeitung editorialized: "Aftershocks,
rubble,
chaos: despite the international community's quick emergency
response,
Haiti is not finding peace two weeks after the devastating
earthquake.
No country stood aside in the efforts to support Haiti with food,
clean water and medicine. People in the West are also very generous
and donate money to support the people in the Caribbean country.
The
fact that the international community stands united in this crisis

is
a positive aspect of globalization. However, the country needs more
than food and water. The country needs functioning structure - this
has nothing to do with imperialism."

14. (Iraq) Execution of Chemical Ali

Several papers reported that Iraq executed chemical Ali, the cousin
of
former President Saddam Hussein. FAZ and Die Welt headlined:
"'Chemical Ali' Executed in Iraq," and reported: "'Chemical Ali' was
considered the most feared representative of Saddam Hussein's
government. He had already been sentenced several times before
because of crimes he committed during Saddam Hussein's term."

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Sueddeutsche Zeitung headlined: "Execution after Four Death
Sentences," and wrote: "As minister, commander, and Saddam's
advisor,
Al-Majid was one of the key figures of Saddam Hussein's regime. He
always served Saddam when the issue was to eliminate rivals or to
club
down insurgents." Tagesspiegel headlined: "'Chemical Ali' Executed"
with the sub-headline: "38 People Killed in Attacks on Hotels in
Baghdad," and noted: "On March 7, parliamentary elections will take
place in Iraq. Over the past few weeks, a governmental commission
dominated by Shiites excluded more than 500 politicians - primarily
Sunnis - from the election because of alleged involvement in
Saddam's
regime. Observers are now expecting an increase in terrorist
attacks
in the next six weeks before the elections."

Under the headline: "Death of a Mass Murderer," Die Welt opined: "Al
Majid...was Saddam Hussein's executioner, he was the man for the
rough
stuff. He ingloriously distinguished himself not only in Halabja
but
three years later also when crushing the Shiite revolt in Southern
Iraq. From a western viewpoint, which is based on the rule of law,
a
lifelong sentence would have been more appropriate for the
69-year-old
man. This would also have been a sign of the new Iraq. But Iraq
can
probably renew itself only if it sheds the old heavy burden of the
past. That is why, from an Iraqi point of view, the man who killed
thousands of their compatriots got his fair punishment."

15. (U.S.) Bank Reforms

Financial Times Deutschland carried an editorial under the headline:
"Aloha Canada - Barack Obama Wants to Split the Banks. The U.S.
President Should Rather Not Do This and Look to the North." The
daily
opined: "It is sad that Barack Obama spent his most recent vacation
in
Hawaii. Canada would have been a better choice. In Canada there
are
sound banks. The secret of their success is, according to the IMF,
that the Canadian banks are universal banks and offer all kind of
services under one roof. President Obama wants the opposite. Go to
Canada, Barack! Instead of looking to the North, the U.S. president

is roaming history and finds the Glass-Steagall Act. Obama's move points to the wrong direction. The crisis of the financial system was not caused by traditional banks...but by shadow banks such as Bear Stearns. Instead of setting up new walls, all actors should be forced to accept stricter oversight rules. When it comes to the size of the banks, Barack Obama is wrong, too. 'Too big to fail' is the decisive challenge but this problem cannot be solved by shrinking banks. The

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Canadians have demonstrated what is to do. Yes, the Canadians can!"

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (1/25) judged: "The chaos is perfect. Following President Obama's far-reaching plans to rein in the banks, the Europeans are trying not to present themselves as financial experts who are trying to slow down this regulatory process. But we can hardly speak of a coordinated effort on either side of the Atlantic. We are faced with a colorful bazaar which the politicians serve with proposals based on their national preferences. The government in London in particular is under pressure. The G-20 once set up a Financial Stability Board, but no one knows what responsibilities it has. The EU, in turn, likes to constantly establish new boards for the regulation of the financial markets. This is creating the suspicion that the public is to be lulled into a false sense of security. But the governments in London and in Washington know that the regulatory plans will never become a reality. Obama is likely to fail in Congress, while Gordon Brown will soon be voted out of office. The pale aftertaste remains that politicians primarily worship populism. The bankers in New York, London, Frankfurt, and Paris can continue their jobs without being worried."

16. (Israel) Goldstone Report

Sueddeutsche Zeitung carried a front-page report on a wave of anti-Semitism in the world and also addresses the upcoming Israeli answer to the Goldstone report under the headline: "Dirty Wave - Since the Gaza War, Anti-Semitic Incidents are on the Rise." The daily wrote: "The Goldstone Report that was written on behalf of the UN accuses Israel of having committed war crimes and has forced Israel to go diplomatically on the defensive - even though the government insists that it only defended itself against terror from Hamas. Prime Minister Netanyahu is now making the Goldstone Report responsible for an increase in anti-Semitism. And now the Israeli government wants to use the international day that commemorates the Holocaust on Wednesday - when Israel's President Simon Peres addresses the Bundestag and Netanyahu visits Auschwitz concentration camp - to go on the offensive against this accusing UN report. Israel's Information Minister Juli Edelstein told Israel's Internet service Ynet: 'The link between the Goldstone Report and the International Holocaust Memorial Day is not

an easy matter, but we must learn the lesson from the things that happened.' But South African judge Richard Goldstone, who is now being accused of anti-Semitism, is a Jew himself."

17. (U.S.) Bernanke Hearing

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Sueddeutsche Zeitung (1/15) judged: "In the end, everyone will applaud and the majority of U.S. senators will congratulate Ben Bernanke - and thus themselves - on his second term as head of the Federal Reserve because a 'no' to Bernanke would shift the responsibility for such a small disaster to the people's representatives. The most important national bank would then need a new leader who would not only have to be more competent than the previous one but also someone who would have to survive a complex confirmation process. And all this must happen with breathtaking speed since the U.S. economy is in serious trouble. In addition, the Democratic senators do not want to deal their president another blow.... So there is little indication that Bernanke will get more than 40 opposing votes. The exciting thing about this process is that such opposition is not a workplace accident but very common in the U.S.... The Americans are then pleased at democracy in action. The message to Bernanke is clear. Watch out when another bubble is forming and think of the 'ordinary American.' Bernanke is likely to stay on the job with a reduced reputation."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (1/25) headlined: "Hurly-Burly About Bernanke," and judged: "The fear among Democrats that the political current could turn against them is the only reason for the unease that has developed around the reconfirmation of Ben Bernanke as head of the Federal Reserve. After President Obama supported the populist trend against Wall Street, Bernanke now serves as a scapegoat for quite a few senators. It is undisputable that the Fed has done everything possible to limit and to overcome the crisis. A final judgment on Bernanke's capabilities as crisis manager depends on to what extent he will succeed in leading the Fed from a crisis to a normal situation again. Following the outburst of political unease this will not be easy, since Bernanke's Democratic supporters showed him their power. With it, pressure on the independence of the Fed will also increase."

MURPHY